

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS ROME 005705

SIPDIS

FROM U.S. MISSION IN ROME

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SECRETARY POWELL, D/S RARMITAGE, U/S MGROSSMAN, IO
A/S KHOLMES, EAP A/S JKELLY, A/S PRM ADEWEY, EAP/CM, AND
IO/EDA RBEHREND
USDA/FAS FOR U/S JPENN AND MCHAMBLISS
USAID FOR ADMINISTRATOR NATSIOS, JBRAUSE, AA/DCHA RWINTER,
AND DCHA/FFP LLANDIS
NSC FOR JDWORKEN, MGREEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [EAGR](#) [ECON](#) [KN](#) [KS](#) [UN](#)

SUBJECT: WFP plea for North Korea humanitarian food
assistance - WFP Executive Director Jim Morris writes
Secretary Powell from Beijing

SIPDIS

REF: (A) Rome 5625, (B) Rome 5222, (C) WFP Executive
Director Morris letter to Secretary Powell on North Korea
food aid dated December 2, 2003

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY. NOT
SUITABLE FOR INTERNET POSTING.

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) WFP Executive Director Jim Morris has written his
second letter this month to Secretary Powell (this one
posted from Beijing) focusing attention on the continuing
humanitarian crisis in the Democratic People's Republic of
Korea (DPRK) and WFP's renewed request for a favorable
decision on the remaining 60,000 tons of Secretary Powell's
February tentative 2003 offer of 100,000 tons of food aid.
The full text of Morris' letter is reproduced below. US
Mission (Ref A) is fully supportive of this request. End
Summary.

WFP Executive Director Jim Morris' letter dated December 18

2.(SBU)(Entire letter). Begin text of letter:

"Mr. Colin Powell
Secretary of State

SIPDIS
Department of State
Washington, DC
United States of America

Dear Secretary Powell,

I am writing to follow-up my letter to you of 2 December
2003 on the subject of food aid to the Democratic People's
Republic of Korea. In that letter I described some of the
important gains that the World Food Program had achieved in
our operating conditions in the DPRK since the beginning of
this year. Now I would like to share with you WFP's
assessment of why additional humanitarian food aid for the
DPRK is of such importance at this crucial juncture.

WFP conducts about 500 monitoring visits in the DPRK each
month. These visits give us unique, unprecedented daily
access to our beneficiaries, mostly women and children, in
their homes, kitchens, and schools throughout the country.
It is regrettable that these visits are conducted in the
presence of North Korean officials. Such presence, however,
does not prevent us from seeing and learning about the
desperately harsh lives, marked especially by insufficient
food, of our beneficiaries. The extreme need of so many
North Koreans is evident to any casual visitor (any society
that uses wood burning stoves to power trucks and buses
clearly is experiencing economic hardship). The specific
food assistance requirements of the poorest of the poor in
the DPRK become readily discernible to WFP's Emergency
Officers in the course of the thousands of monitoring visits
they conduct.

You will be aware that an extensive nutrition survey
undertaken in the country late last year by WFP, UNICEF and
the DPRK government showed significant reductions in
malnutrition amongst young children since 1998. In large

part these gains are a direct result of the consistent and generous food assistance provided by the United States and others through WFP.

SUBJECT: WFP plea for North Korea humanitarian food assistance - WFP Executive Director Jim Morris writes Secretary Powell from Beijing

SIPDIS

Despite the gains, insufficient food and poor diet are commonplace for millions of North Koreans. About 30% of pregnant and nursing women are malnourished. These pregnant women will give birth to low-birth weight children who will start life disadvantaged because their mothers did not have access to proper nutrition during pregnancy. There also remains a high incidence of stunting in young children. More than 40% of the country's children are markedly too short for their age, a condition that is largely irreversible and has a terrible impact on mental growth that has yet to be measured. Perhaps most worrying, there remain more than 70,000 North Korean children who suffer from severe malnutrition. Once severely malnourished, many die as the ability of the country to provide adequate therapeutic treatment is grossly limited. One of WFP's main objectives is to save children's lives by preventing them from ever falling into such a state. We can only accomplish that objective with additional, timely assistance from our donors.

While WFP continues to work to improve the nutritional status of our target beneficiaries, we are worried that further prolonged disruption in food assistance could quickly lead to the erosion of the hard won gains achieved in the nutrition of women and children over these past few years. Our current program calls for the distribution of about 40,000 tons of cereals and other food commodities each month. The large majority of this is intended for young children, and pregnant and nursing women. Our immediate concern is that an imminent break in our distributions will eventually affect nearly 4 million of these most needy beneficiaries, as we are forced to cut more and more of them from our assistance. Without immediate new donations, the break will be greater than any we have experienced since we began working in the country eight years ago.

Faced with an alarming reduction in donor support over the past two years, the U.S. is once again in a unique position to help. Historically the U.S. has not only given large amounts of cereals, but has also been, by far, the most generous contributor of those items needed to improve nutrition - beans, powdered milk, oil, sugar. These commodities, used to produce enriched foods for especially vulnerable target groups, are now desperately needed.

The concerns of the United States about monitoring and access in the DPRK are exactly the same as WFP's. Indeed, we perhaps feel those concerns even more acutely because it is our reputation that is at stake. We certainly remain dissatisfied with the current conditions. We have worked hard to improve them, and have achieved some modest but nonetheless significant and steady progress in this direction since the beginning of 2003.

Achieving further progress will remain a top priority for me and my staff. Indeed, I am sending this letter from Beijing, where on Saturday I will meet Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing, and will impress upon him the important contribution that China could make in convincing the North Koreans to move towards international standards for food aid monitoring. I will share a similar message with the South Korean Government.

I would also like to inform you that the DPRK government has accepted my nomination of Mr. Richard Ragan as the new WFP Country Director in North Korea. Mr. Ragan is currently Country Director in Zambia, and previously served the United States Government in the National Security Council, the Defense Department and USAID. I am assigning as Mr. Ragan's top priority the pursuit, with the full commitment and

support of WFP's top management, further improvements to WFP's monitoring and access conditions in the DPRK. WFP will continue to pursue this issue with determination.

WFP is not satisfied with the monitoring situation. But while we continue to make progress toward our goal of international standards, we are also saving the lives of the most vulnerable. We know there are millions of hungry, needy North Korean women and children. We know WFP food assistance is reaching many of them, and is making a difference. We are confident in our operations. We believe that for WFP to stand by and do nothing, while millions of innocent civilians go hungry, would be far worse than any risk associated with the current WFP operation.

Mr. Secretary, this is a crucial moment and the United States is in a unique position. The needs, in both scope

and timing, are pressing. The U.S. decision on the balance of the 100,000-ton pledge for 2003 is a bell weather. A decision not to provide the remaining 60,000 tons will be seen as a vote of no confidence by the U.S. in the WFP operation, and other donors, I fear, will in turn be reluctant to give. A positive decision, I believe, will have just the opposite effect. The cumulative impact on the future of WFP's operation could make all the difference between a dwindling operation with progressively fewer staff and less capabilities, and a strong one with extensive access throughout the country, and able to achieve continued steady progress on monitoring.

I again respectfully urge you, Mr. Secretary, and your government, to provide the World Food Program with the 60,000 balance of your 2003 pledge to the DPRK. With our donations rapidly running out, time is critical. Sincerely, WFP Executive Director James T. Morris." End of WFP letter.

Comment

[13](#). (SBU) US Mission/Rome (as manifested Ref A) is fully supportive of Jim Morris' request. Hall

WE DO NOT USE D. THIS IS THE GUIDELINES. AMADS DISTRIBUTION CORRECTED AS POSSIBLE
NNNN
2003ROME05705 - Classification: UNCLASSIFIED